



Australian Government

PCT/AU2004/001754

Patent Office
Canberra

I, JANENE PEISKER, TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION SUPPORT AND SALES hereby certify that annexed is a true copy of the Provisional specification in connection with Application No. 2003906878 for a patent by DARRYL JOHN JONES, GRAEME ALLAN COLLINS and TAUAITI WALLY ROYAL as filed on 12 December 2003.



WITNESS my hand this
Twenty-fourth day of December 2004

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. Peisker".

JANENE PEISKER
TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION
SUPPORT AND SALES

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

112342090

1.

AUSTRALIA
Patents Act 1990 (Cth)

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

**Darryl John Jones
Graeme Allan Collins
Tauaiti Wally Royal**

Invention Title

Water Condensor Apparatus

The invention is described in the following statement:

**Blake Dawson Waldron Patent Services
Level 41, Grosvenor Place
225 George Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Telephone: + 61 3 9258 6000
Fax: + 61 3 9258 6999**

Ref: 02-1356-6112

112342090

2

WATER CONDENSOR APPARATUS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention broadly relates to methods and apparatus for condensing water from ambient air and collecting the condensed water. The apparatus in at least one form
5 provides a means for generating potable water for consumption or other purposes and finds particular application in areas where potable water supplies are limited.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In many locations around the world access to a fresh potable water supply is limited, forcing many to use water for everyday needs that would not generally be deemed
10 suitable for such use. Indeed, many water supplies are contaminated or polluted and in order to use the water safely, it is necessary for the water to be boiled or treated in some other way.

While yachts and ships carry their own water supplies during a voyage, it is often necessary to restrict daily usage of the available water due to access to fresh water
15 supplies other than rainfall being unavailable. Similarly, mining operations or military camps in remote locations and, for example, island resorts, all have a need for fresh water.

Water, of course, has thousands of uses in addition to being required to sustain life. Such uses include washing and use in industrial processes amongst others. In areas or
20 locations where the supply of water is limited, it is desirable to have access to regular supplies of fresh water. While supplies can be replenished by rain water, rainfall can be variable and insufficient. Moreover, the cost of transporting fresh water to remote locations can be expensive.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In one aspect of the present invention there is provided a modular system for collecting
25 water from ambient air, the system comprising:

a condensor unit for condensing the water from the ambient air and collecting the condensed water;

112342090

3.

a refrigeration system housed in the condensor unit and including a compressor for compressing a refrigerant vapour, for cooling at least one condensation surface to effect the condensation of the water from the ambient air onto the condensation surface; and

- 5 at least one dispenser unit adapted for being located remotely from the condensor unit for receiving the condensed water from the condensor unit and dispensing the condensed water.

The dispenser unit may be provided mounted on the condensor unit for being removed therefrom and located remotely from the condensor unit if desired. That is, an
10 embodiment of the modular system may be provided as a single unit for condensing the water from the ambient air and dispensing the water in the one location, but which can be disassembled for locating the dispenser unit in a location remote from the condensor unit. In an alternative embodiment, the dispenser unit and the condensor unit are provided as entirely separate units.

- 15 As the water can be dispensed remotely from where it is condensed from the ambient air and collected, the condensor unit can be located outside of a building where it is exposed to prevailing atmospheric humidity conditions, while the dispenser unit may be located within the building. As the ambient environment in many buildings is air-conditioned and the humidity in the building controlled, locating the condensor unit outside enables
20 water production to be maximised. Locating the condensor unit outside also removes any noise associated with the operation of the refrigeration system of the condensor unit to outside the building.

Accordingly, in another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a modular system for collecting water from ambient air, the system comprising:

- 25 a condensor unit for condensing the water from the ambient air and collecting the condensed water;

a refrigeration system housed in the condensor unit and including a compressor for compressing a refrigerant vapour, for cooling at least one condensation surface to effect the condensation of the water from the ambient air onto the condensation surface;
30 and

112342090

4.

at least one dispenser unit located remotely from the condensor unit for receiving the condensed water from the condensor unit and dispensing the condensed water.

Typically, the refrigeration system will further comprise a condensor for condensing the refrigerant vapour into a liquid refrigerant, and an evaporator for evaporation of the

5 liquid refrigerant to cool the condensation surface.

Preferably, the condensor will be arranged for contact with ambient air flowing from the condensation surface, for cooling the refrigerant vapour and thereby causing the refrigerant vapour to condense. The condensation surface will generally be a surface of the evaporator.

10 Preferably, the condensor unit will also comprise a device for causing the ambient air to flow through the condensor unit from the evaporator to the condensor. Most preferably, the device will be a fan.

Preferably, the condensor unit will further include a water circulation system, comprising a holding tank for receiving the collected condensed water, and a pump for pumping the
15 condensed water from the holding tank to the dispenser unit. Preferably, the water circulation system will also comprise at least one ultraviolet (UV) light treatment unit for treating the condensed water in the condensor unit with ultraviolet light to kill or inactivate bacteria and/or other microorganisms that may be present in the water, prior to the water being pumped by the pump from the condensor unit to the dispenser unit.

20 Preferably, the dispenser unit will be provided with at least one indicator for providing an indication of a corresponding operational parameter of the modular system. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the dispenser unit will be provided with a plurality of such indicators, each indicator providing an indication of a different operational parameter, respectively. For instance, an indicator may provide an indication of whether
25 water is available from the condensor unit, whether a water filter or air filter in the condensor unit requires cleaning or replacing, or other such operational parameter.

Preferably, the dispenser unit will comprise a dispenser body and a storage bottle for storing water received from the condensor unit, wherein the storage bottle is removable from the dispenser body. Typically, the storage bottle will have a valve for dispensing the
30 water. In a preferred embodiment, the dispenser body will be adapted for dispensing

112342090

5.

water from the condensor unit following removal of the storage bottle from the dispenser body.

In addition, an embodiment of a modular system of the invention may be provided with at least one adjustable air intake operable to allow ambient air to flow to the condensor

- 5 by-passing contact with the condensation surface on which the water condenses, such that a flowrate of ambient air flowing into contact with the condensor is adjusted relative to ambient air flowing from exterior of the condensation unit into contact with the condensation surface. This allows increased air flow past the condensor for cooling the condensor to enable refrigerant vapour in the condensor to condense into liquid
- 10 refrigerant, without increasing the rate of flow of the ambient air from the condensation surface and thereby adversely affecting condensation of water from the ambient air onto the condensation surface.

Accordingly, in another aspect of the present invention there is provided apparatus for collecting water from ambient air, the apparatus comprising:

- 15 a condensor unit for condensing the water from the ambient air and collecting the condensed water;

at least one condensation surface for contact with the ambient air;

at least one adjustable air intake; and

- a refrigeration system housed in the condensor unit and including a compressor
- 20 for compressing a refrigerant vapour and a condensor for condensing the compressed refrigerant vapour into liquid refrigerant, for cooling the condensation surface to effect the condensation of the water from the ambient air onto the condensation surface;

- wherein the condensor is arranged for contact with ambient air flowing from the condensation surface, and the air intake is operable to allow ambient air to flow to the
- 25 condensor by-passing contact with the condensation surface such that a flowrate of ambient air flowing into contact with the condensor is adjusted relative to ambient air flowing from exterior of the condensor unit into contact with the condensation surface.

In yet another aspect of the present invention, there is provided apparatus for treating water with ultraviolet light, the apparatus comprising:

112342090

6.

an ultraviolet light source for providing the ultraviolet light;

a hollow member defining a kill chamber with an inlet for entry of the water into the kill chamber and an outlet for passage of the water from the kill chamber, and which is transparent to the ultraviolet light; and

- 5 an inducer element arranged for inducing spiral flow of the water along the kill chamber;

wherein the ultraviolet light source is arranged for irradiating the water with the ultraviolet light as the water flows along the kill chamber.

- 10 The spiral flow of the water along the kill chamber mixes the water and maximises exposure of the water to the UV light, and thereby treatment of the water with the UV light.

- 15 Preferably, the inducer element will comprise a stationary spiral element arranged within the kill chamber in a fixed position for inducing the spiral flow of the water along the kill chamber as the water flows past the spiral element. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the spiral element will comprise a plate twisted into a spiral with a longitudinal axis directed along the kill chamber. Alternatively, the inducer element may comprise a rotor which is rotatably mounted in the kill chamber for being rotated as the water flows past the rotor.

- 20 Preferably, the apparatus for treating the water with UV light will further comprise a holder which holds the UV light source and the hollow member defining the kill chamber in position alongside one another.

- 25 Preferably, a reflector for reflecting incident UV light from the UV light source into the kill chamber will also be provided. Typically, the reflector will be arranged in the holder behind the UV light source and lie alongside the UV light source for reflecting the UV light forward onto the kill chamber.

Condensing water from ambient air provides a way of supplementing fresh or stored water supplies in remote or extreme locations where fresh water is scarce or otherwise unavailable, and may reduce reliance on, or the need for, water to be transported to such locations. Similarly, where it is necessary to carry water supplies such as on a ship or boat

112342090

7.

during a voyage, condensing water from ambient air provides an alternative source of water during travel and so allows less reliance to be placed on stored water. Indeed, by being able to condense water from ambient air, stores of water may be reduced. In addition, condensing water from air provides some certainty as to the quality of the water, and provides a source of water in areas where there is doubt as to the quality of the existing water supplies or the available water is known to be polluted or contaminated, or is otherwise not suitable for the intended purpose of the water. Accordingly, one or more embodiments of the present invention find application in a number of practical situations.

Throughout this specification the word "comprise", or variations such as "comprises" or "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated element, integer or step, or group of elements, integers or steps, but not the exclusion of any other element, integer or step, or group of elements, integers or steps.

All publications mentioned in this specification are herein incorporated by reference. Any discussion of documents, acts, materials, devices, articles or the like which has been included in the present specification is solely for the purpose of providing a context for the present invention. It is not to be taken as an admission that any or all of these matters form part of the prior art base or were common general knowledge in the field relevant to the present invention as it existed in Australia or elsewhere before the priority date of each claim of this application.

The features and advantages of the present invention will become further apparent from the following description of preferred embodiments of the present invention together with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

FIGURE 1a is a perspective view of a condensor unit of a modular system for condensing water from ambient air and a dispenser unit of the modular system;

FIGURE 1b is an exploded perspective view of the dispenser unit of Fig. 1a;

FIGURE 2a is a perspective view of a further embodiment of a modular system of the invention;

FIGURE 2b shows the modular system of Fig. 2a with the storage bottle of the dispenser unit removed;

112342090

8.

FIGURE 3a is a perspective view of a further embodiment of a dispenser unit of the invention;

FIGURE 3b is a perspective view of the dispenser unit of Fig. 3a with the storage bottle removed;

- 5 **FIGURE 4** is a schematic diagram showing components of the condensor unit 10 of fig.1;

FIGURE 5 is a schematic diagram of the refrigeration system of the dispenser unit of Fig. 1;

FIGURE 6 is a schematic diagram showing a water circulation system of the dispenser unit of Fig. 1;

- 10 **FIGURE 7** is a partial side view of an ultraviolet light treatment unit for irradiating water collected by the dispenser unit of Fig.1 with ultraviolet light;

FIGURE 8 is a partial side view of an inducer element for introducing spiral flow into water flowing through the kill chamber of the ultraviolet light treatment unit of Fig. 7;

- 15 **FIGURE 9** is a plan view of a rotor for generating spiral flow of water collected by the dispenser unit of an embodiment of the invention, for facilitating treatment of the water with ultraviolet light;

FIGURE 10 is a plan view of the holder of the ultraviolet light treatment unit of Fig. 7;

- 20 **FIGURE 11** is a schematic view showing indicators for indicating the status of various operational parameters of a modular system for condensing water from ambient air embodied by the invention;

FIGURE 12 is a schematic view of water level sensing apparatus; and

FIGURE 13 is a circuit diagram of a sensing circuit of the water level sensing apparatus of Fig. 12.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

- 25 A condensor unit 10 of an embodiment of a modular system 12 for condensing water from ambient air is shown in Fig. 1 together with a dispenser unit 14. The condensor unit 10

112342090

9.

houses a refrigeration system 16 which cools ambient air entering the housing 18 of the condensor unit through vent openings 20 to, or below, the dew point of the water, causing water vapour in the air to condense within the condensor unit 10 where it is collected.

Water collected in the condensor unit is subsequently pumped through a feed conduit 22
5 to the dispenser unit 14 for being dispensed when required.

The condensor unit 10 is located externally of the building generally indicated by the numeral 24, and is thereby exposed to the prevailing atmospheric humidity conditions for maximising collection of water from the ambient air.

The dispenser unit 14 shown is a wall mounted unit located internally in the building and
10 comprises a dispenser body 26, and a storage bottle 28 with a tap (not shown) located in a lower region of the bottle which is operable for dispensing water from the bottle. As indicated more clearly in the exploded view shown in Fig. 1b, the storage bottle has an upper recess 30 contoured for sealing engagement with the head 32 of the dispenser body, and an upper opening 34 for receiving the water from the dispenser body as the water is
15 pumped from the condensor unit 10. The dispenser body 26 has a downwardly projecting stem section 36 which terminates in a rest 38 for placement of a cup.

Accordingly, the dispenser unit 14 provides for dual operation. That is, either collection and dispensing of water from the storage bottle 28, or removal of the storage bottle and dispensing of water on demand directly from the head 32 of the dispenser body. For the
20 latter mode of operation, the head 32 of the dispenser body incorporates a switch operable for blocking the continuous flow of water from the condensor unit, and a valve operable for dispensing water from the head 32 on demand for collection in the cup when placed on the rest 38.

Another embodiment of the modular system of the invention for condensing water from
25 ambient air is shown in Fig. 2. As shown, the dispenser unit 14 is mounted on the condensor unit 10 and is removable therefrom as a single unit for being located remotely from the condensor unit if desired. As with the dispenser unit shown in Fig. 1b, the storage bottle is removable from the dispenser body such that the water may be independently dispensed on demand from the dispenser body itself. Hence, the
30 dispenser body may be used independently of the storage bottle 28 as indicated in Fig. 2b. In this embodiment, the recess 40 defined in the condensor unit 10 for reception of the storage bottle 28 provides a platform 42 on which a cup or other receptacle may be placed

112342090

10.

before being filled with water from the dispenser body 26. The platform 42 is corrugated and has a raised outer peripheral rim for containing any spilt water.

A further dispenser unit 14 is shown in Fig. 3a. As can be seen, this unit is a wall mounted unit with a removable storage tank 28. The rear region of the dispenser unit 14 is received in a cavity defined in the interior wall 44 on which the dispenser unit is mounted such that the front region 46 of the unit is flush against the wall. As shown more clearly in Fig. 3b, a channel 48 is defined in each side of the storage tank which receive corresponding guides 49 provided in the recess 50 of the dispenser unit for holding the storage tank in position within the unit. Further support of the storage bottle 28 is provided by the shelf 52 of the dispenser unit 14 on which the bottle rests.

In this embodiment, the dispenser unit 14 is mounted above a basin 54. A user may, therefore, wash their hands in the basin 54 using mains water from the tap 56 but drink the potable water from the dispenser unit.

A schematic diagram illustrating the components of the condensor unit 10 is shown in Fig. 4. More particularly, and as indicated in the figure, the housing 18 of the condensor unit 10 incorporates a compartment 58 housing an evaporator 60 and a condensor 62. Ambient air A is drawn through an air filter 63 and then the evaporator 60 after entering the vent openings 20 of the housing 18. As the air passes through the evaporator, it contacts condensation surfaces of the evaporator causing the air to be cooled to, or below, the dew point of water vapour in the air and thereby water to condense from the air onto the condensation surfaces. The condensed water falls by gravity to the collector 64 in the form of a funnel, then passes through heat exchanger 66 and negative pressure trap 68 to a holding tank 70 (see Fig. 6) via conduit 72.

The cooled air leaving the evaporator 60 then passes to the condensor 62. This cools the condensor such that hot refrigerant vapour contained within the condensor condenses to a hot liquid refrigerant, and the air is thereby warmed. The warm dry air which leaves the condensor 62 is then extracted from the compartment 58 and exhausted to the atmosphere by a fan 74. As will be understood, the fan provides a negative pressure in compartment 58 which draws the ambient air A into the compartment through evaporator for further condensation of water from the air.

112342090

11.

The refrigeration system 16 comprises refrigeration equipment contained in a further compartment 75 within the housing 18 of the condensor unit. The refrigeration may be either a single pressure or dual pressure system, and provides sub-cooled liquid refrigerant to the evaporator for evaporation within the evaporator to effect the cooling of the evaporator for condensation of the water from the ambient air. The resulting heated refrigerant vapour is drawn from the evaporator and passed to the condensor 62 for condensation to hot liquid refrigerant as described above. To enhance thermal efficiency, heat is drawn from the hot refrigerant liquid by the cool condensed water passing through heat exchanger 66. This cools the liquid refrigerant prior to the liquid refrigerant being recycled to the evaporator as described in more detail below with reference to Fig. 5.

As shown in Fig. 5, the heated refrigerant vapour is drawn through suction loop 76 from the lower region of the evaporator 60 to a compressor 78. The suction loop 76 traps and holds any liquid refrigerant which might pass from the evaporator, thereby preventing the liquid refrigerant from entering and potentially damaging the compressor 78. The refrigerant vapour is compressed and thereby heated in the compressor, prior to being discharged through hot gas loop 80 to the top of the condensor 62. The hot gas loop 80 traps any liquid refrigerant draining back from the condensor 62 to the compressor 78.

The air drawn to the condensor 62 by the fan 74 cools the high pressure hot refrigerant vapour in the condensor such that the refrigerant vapour condenses. The condensed liquid refrigerant is then cooled by the condensed water passing through the heat exchanger 66 as described above. The cooled liquid refrigerant subsequently drains from the bottom of the condensor 62 into reservoir 82, prior to passing from the reservoir through a filter 84 which removes any contaminants and moisture from the liquid refrigerant. From the filter 84, the refrigerant travels along tubing 86 incorporating a sight glass 88 which allows a visual check for the presence of any moisture or bubbles in the liquid refrigerant.

The tubing 86 feeds the dry, cooled liquid refrigerant to a thermostatic expansion valve 90. As the liquid refrigerant passes through the valve, the pressure of the liquid refrigerant decreases. The resulting low pressure cold liquid refrigerant with some flash gas is fed from the expansion valve 90 into the evaporator 60 for effecting cooling of the ambient air and condensation of the water therefrom.

112342090

12.

For efficient operation of the condensor unit, the flowrate of the ambient air A through the compartment 60 is adjusted to optimise condensation of water per unit volume of the ambient air flowing through the evaporator, while maintaining sufficient airflow through the condensor for heat transfer from the condensor to the air for achieving the condensing of the refrigerant vapour in the condensor. As will be understood, the refrigeration system 16 operates to cool the condensation surfaces of the evaporator without freezing the condensed water.

For any given prevailing atmospheric conditions, there is a specific humidity value measured in grams of water vapour per kilogram of the air. For example, a specific humidity of between 4.5 and 6 grams of moisture per kilogram of air correlates to a dry bulb temperature of between 1° C and 6.5° C. In use, the condensor 10 is operated to condense water from the ambient air entering the condensor unit such that the specific humidity of the air flowing from the evaporator to the condensor is reduced to a specific humidity correlating with a selected reference dry bulb temperature. The selected dry bulb temperature will typically be in the above temperature range and usually, will be about 5° C.

Returning to Fig. 4, a temperature sensor 92 is provided in the dispenser unit 14 for measuring the dry bulb temperature of the air passing from the evaporator 60 to the condensor 62. This temperature is compared in control module 94 with the selected reference dry bulb temperature which has been manually set in the control module. If the dry bulb temperature measured by temperature sensor 92 increases above the set reference dry bulb temperature, the control module operates actuator 96 such that air intake 98 in the form of a hinged damper opens allowing ambient air A to be drawn into compartment 58 of the housing 18. This decreases the flowrate of the ambient air A being drawn into the evaporator which in turn lowers the dry bulb temperature of the air leaving the evaporator.

As the flowrate of the air leaving the evaporator is decreased, the amount of cooled air from the evaporator available for cooling the condensor also decreases. This results in a rise in the pressure of the refrigerant vapour in the condensor above the optimum pressure for the fixed refrigeration capacity of the refrigeration system 16. The pressure of the refrigerant vapour in the condensor is measured by a pressure sensor 100. In response to the increased pressure measured by the pressure sensor, the control module

112342090

13.

94 increases the speed of the fan 74 via controller 102 and operates actuator 96 to further open the air intake 98 to increase the flowrate of air flowing to the condensor, while simultaneously maintaining the flowrate of the ambient air A through the evaporator. The increased flowrate of air to the condensor removes heat from the condensor such that

5 the pressure of the refrigerant vapour in the condensor reduces to the optimum pressure for the fixed refrigeration capacity of the refrigeration system.

The control module 94 continues to monitor the dry bulb temperature of the air leaving the evaporator and the pressure of the refrigerant vapour in the condensor respectively measured by temperature sensor 92 and pressure sensor 100. If the dry bulb temperature

10 sensed by the temperature sensor decreases below the set level, the control module 94 operates to decrease the speed of the fan and activate the actuator 96 to partially or completely close the air intake 98 such that the flowrate of the ambient air into the dispenser unit 14 decreases.

The monitoring cycle is repeated at regular intervals to ensure optimum efficiency of the

15 apparatus and thereby, maximum condensation of water from the ambient air. The timing circuit for initiating operation of the monitoring cycle is also located within the control module. The provision of such timing circuits is well within the scope of the skilled addressee. For different latitudes or atmospheric conditions, the reference dry bulb temperature set in the control module 94 may be adjusted.

20 The condensor unit 10 further incorporates a water circulation system 104. As shown in Fig. 6, this system includes a holding tank 70 which receives the condensed water from the collector 64 (see Fig. 4). A pump 106 draws water from the holding tank 70 and pumps the water through conduit 108 to T-connector 110. Some of the water continues along conduit 108 to ultraviolet light treatment unit 112 where the water is irradiated with

25 UV light at a wavelength of 253.7nm prior to being returned to holding tank 70. As will be understood, treatment with the UV light kills bacteria and other pathogens which may be present in the water.

The remainder of the water entering the T-connector 110 is diverted to junction 114 comprising a further T-connector, where the water is directed to float valve 116 or

30 activated charcoal filter 118, or both. If there is sufficient water in holding tank 70 to allow water to pass from the condensor unit 10 to the remotely located dispenser unit 14, the float valve 116 closes the end 122 of pipe 124. The float valve 116 comprises a float 126

112342090

14.

carried on the end of float arm 128. The float arm is pivotally hinged at an opposite end to the interior of the holding tank 70. As the water level rises in the holding tank, the float 126 rises causing sealing washer 130 carried by valve body 132 to be pressed against the end 122 of the tubing 124 as the float arm 128 is lifted by the float, preventing water from
5 flowing back into the holding tank 70. When system valve 134 is open, the water pressure generated by the action of the pump 106 forces water through filter 118 and auxiliary UV light treatment unit 136, prior to passing to the dispenser unit 14 through feed conduit 22 (see Fig. 1).

The feed conduit 22 comprises a flexible hose connected to the condensor unit 10 and the
10 dispenser unit 14 by bayonet fittings which sealingly couple with corresponding female fittings on the condensor unit and dispenser unit. A return flexible hose (not shown) for recirculating excess water from the dispenser unit to the holding tank 70 via a return pipe in the condensor unit is also provided. Accordingly, water continually flows back and forth between the condensor unit 10 and the dispenser unit 14 when the storage bottle in
15 the dispenser unit is full. The water is, therefore, treated with UV light each time it is recirculated through the condensor unit before being returned to the dispenser unit. As with the feed conduit, the return hose is coupled to the condensor unit and dispenser unit by mating bayonet and corresponding female connectors, respectively.

As water is pumped from the holding tank 70 in the condensor unit to fill the storage
20 bottle 28 of the remotely located dispenser unit 14, or to otherwise meet demand for the water, the water level in the holding tank lowers and the float valve starts to open allowing a portion of the water pumped to junction 114 to discharge through the partially opened end 122 of pipe 124. As a result, the water pressure of the water passing through system valve 134 decreases and the flowrate of the water decreases accordingly. The
25 flowrate continues to decrease until eventually the float valve is fully opened and insufficient water pressure is available to pump water through the system valve. However, sufficient water remains in the storage tank 70 to allow re-circulation of the water through the UV light treatment unit 112, but water cannot be pumped to the remote dispenser unit 14 until more condensed water enters the storage tank from the collector
30 64.

The UV light treatment unit 112 is illustrated in Fig. 7 and comprises an ultraviolet lamp 138 mounted in a holder 140 incorporating a reflector 142. Lamp sockets 144 receive the

112342090

15.

UV lamp and are arranged within the holder 140, one at each end of the UV lamp respectively, and facilitate electrical connection to the lamp. A quartz tube 146 defining a kill chamber for passage of the water is received by top and bottom elbows 148 and 150 which hold it in position in front of the UV lamp 138. One elbow is mounted on each end plate of the holder, respectively. A washer (not shown) between each end of the teflon tube and the corresponding elbow prevents water leakage.

The bottom elbow 150 incorporates an inducer element for inducing spiral water flow in the kill chamber. The inducer element 152 comprises a plate member 154 twisted in the form of a spiral and which is held in a fixed position on the end of a stem 156 projecting from a base 158 of the inducer element. In use, the water enters inlet 160 defined in the body 161 of the bottom elbow which directs the water into contact with the twisted plate member 154 of the inducer element in the kill chamber. The width of the plate member substantially corresponds to the diameter of the kill chamber. As the water flows over the plate member, spiral water flow is induced along the kill chamber. This mixes the water and maximises exposure of the water to the UV light, and thereby treatment of the water. The reflector 142 enhances treatment of the water by reflecting lateral UV light back onto the kill chamber. As also shown in Fig. 7, one or more further reflectors may be provided for reflecting incident UV light back onto the kill chamber.

A partially exploded view of the bottom elbow 150 is shown in Fig. 8. As indicated in the figure, a groove 164 receiving an O-ring 166 is defined in the base 158 of the inducer element 152 for preventing water leakage between the base 158 and the body 161 of the bottom elbow. A male thread 168 defined on the base 158 engages with a corresponding female thread defined in the interior of the body 161.

Rather than a plate member 154 twisted into the form of a spiral, the inducer element may incorporate a rotor of the type illustrated in Fig. 9 rotatably mounted on the end of the stem 156 of the inducer element and which is rotated as the water passes from the bottom elbow into the kill chamber for achieving the spiral flow of the water.

An end view of the holder 140 of the UV light treatment unit 112 is shown in Fig. 10. As can be seen, a hole 170 is defined in each end plate of the holder for reception of the corresponding elbow 148 or 150. The reflector is formed from stainless steel sheet and has opposing outwardly directed side arms 172. The side arms are inclined relative to one another and extend substantially along the entire length of the holder 140. The rear 174 of

112342090

16.

the reflector stands against the interior face of the holder and is held in position by reception of the lamp sockets 144 through corresponding openings (not shown) defined in each end region of the reflector. The auxiliary UV treatment unit 136 has the same construction as that shown in Fig. 7.

- 5 As indicated in Fig. 11, the dispenser unit 14 is provided with an array of indicator lamps for indicating the operational status of various parameters of the modular system. In the particular example illustrated, separate indicator lamps are provided for indicating whether the holding tank 70 is full or empty, whether water is available from the holding tank 70, whether the air filter 63 or water filter 118 in the dispenser unit need cleaning or
10 changing, and whether there is a fault in the modular system, respectively. Relevant ones of the indicator lamps 176 are lit in response to frequency encoded signals received by an electronic frequency decoder 178 housed in the head 32 of the dispenser unit from an electronic frequency encoder 180 housed in the dispenser unit. The signals pass from the frequency encoder 180 to the frequency decoder 178 via twisted pair electrical wires
15 connecting the frequency encoder to the frequency decoder.

- Input signals to the frequency decoder 180 are provided from switches arranged for indicating the status of the parameters being monitored. For instance, a float switch for indicating the holding tank 70 is full may be located within the holding tank such that when the water level rises to the holding capacity of the holding tank 70, the float switch
20 closes providing a signal to the frequency encoder 180 which in turn transmits a signal to the frequency decoder which causes the relevant lamp 176 to light indicating the storage tank is full. When the float switch closes, the operation of the compressor is also stopped which in turn stops condensation of water and the storage tank from filling further. An overflow outlet defined in the holding tank 70 and which leads to a drain is also provided
25 as a safeguard. When the level of water in the holding tank falls, the float switch opens and the compressor 78 recommences operation.

- Similarly, a float switch or other suitable switch may be located in a lower region of the holding tank 70 for indicating low water level. A yet further such switch may be located slightly higher than the tank for indicating water availability. Switches which may be
30 used for these purposes include switches which are short circuited and thereby closed by contact with water.

The flow of ambient air through the evaporator 60 in use will generally be within predetermined upper and lower limits. To indicate that the air filter needs cleaning or replacing, a sale switch is provided between the air filter and the evaporator 60. When

112342090

17.

the flow rate of the ambient air decreases below the normal operating range, movement of the sale closes a contact generating a signal to the frequency encoder 180 which in turn causes the corresponding indicator lamp 176 on the remotely located dispenser unit 14 to light. Of course, rather than using switches which are normally open, switches which are
5 normally closed and cause a signal to be generated upon being opened may be utilised instead.

Rather than a flow switch, a timer comprising a timing circuit for timing hours of operation of the dispenser unit is used for generating a signal to the frequency encoder 180 for causing the indicator lamp 176 on the dispenser unit for indicating the water filter
10 118 requires attention. At the end of a predetermined time limit which may be several months or more in length, a signal is generated by the timer for causing the corresponding indicator lamp 176 to light.

Instead of switches, a water level sensing and switching apparatus may be utilised for monitoring the depth of water in the holding tank 70 as shown in Fig. 12. The sensing
15 apparatus comprises an upright cylinder 184 arranged in the holding tank to receive the condensed water from the collector 64 of the condensor unit 10. Two closely spaced reference electrodes 186 are located in the cylinder. The cylinder fills with water from the collector 64 until depth h1 is reached which represents the maximum water depth the cylinder can hold. As more water drains into the cylinder, water begins to overflow from
20 the cylinder through overflow tube 188 into the holding tank 70. The reference electrodes 186 are connected to an electronic sensing circuit through wires 190 and provide a reference conductive resistance.

A pair of conductive electrodes 192 which are identical to reference electrodes 186 are mounted in the storage tank 70 at the same vertical position as reference electrodes 186.
25 With no water in the storage tank 70, the electrical resistance between conductive electrodes 192 is infinite. As water enters the tank from overflow tube 188, the water level represented by h2 rises and lowers the conductive resistance between the conductive electrodes. The conductive electrodes are also connected to the sensing circuit.

When the holding tank 70 is full, the conductive resistance across conductive electrodes
30 192 is substantially identical to that across the reference electrodes 186. As the depth of water falls in the holding tank 70, the resistance between conductive electrodes 192 changes. The depth of water in the holding tank is determined by the sensing circuit by comparing the conductive resistance across the conductive electrodes 192 with the conductive resistance across the reference electrodes 186.

112342090

18.

The sensing circuit is illustrated in Fig. 13 and senses the depth of water in the holding tank as follows. The combination of resistor R1 and the resistance from reference electrodes 192 in series provides a reference voltage +Vref at point X in the circuit. +Vref is applied to two or more comparators (CP1, CP2, CP3) through resistance ladder made up of R3, R4, R5. The values of each resistor in the ladder are selected to provide reference inputs to each comparator equal to a known proportion of +Vref (eg. 1/4, 1/2 of +Vref). The combination of variable resistor R2 and the resistance from conductive electrodes in series provides a variable voltage +Vvar at point Y in the circuit.

+Vvar is applied to the second input of each comparator. As +Vvar changes with the change in water depth in the holding tank 70, the pre-set voltage ladder determines which comparator switches on or off. The presence or absence of voltage output from each comparator turns indicators in the form of light emitting diodes arranged on the dispenser unit on or off, thus indicating the depth of water in the storage tank 70 in the condensor unit. The output from a comparator may also control a function of the condensor unit, such as turning the condensor 10 and fan 74 off when the storage tank is full. For calibration purposes, variable resistor R2 is adjusted with both pairs of electrodes 186 and 192 fully immersed in water of the same quality to achieve +Vref equal to +Vvar.

It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

25 Dated: 12 December 2003

Darryl John Jones, Graeme Allan Collins and Tauaiti Wally Royal

Patent Attorneys for the Applicants:

30 BLAKE DAWSON WALDRON PATENT SERVICES

1/8

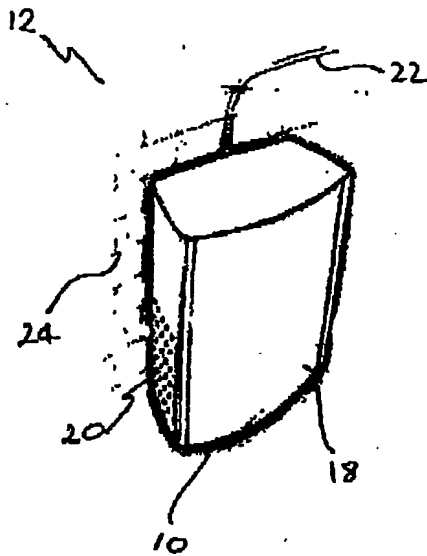


FIG. 1a

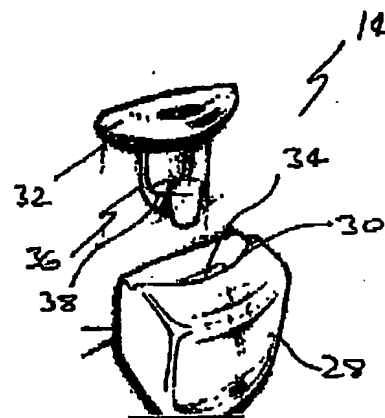
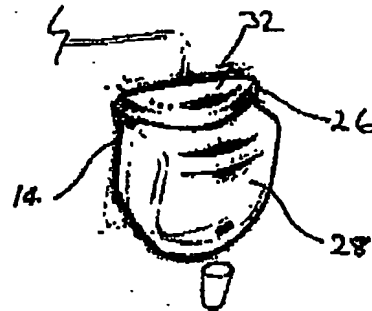


FIG. 1b

2/8

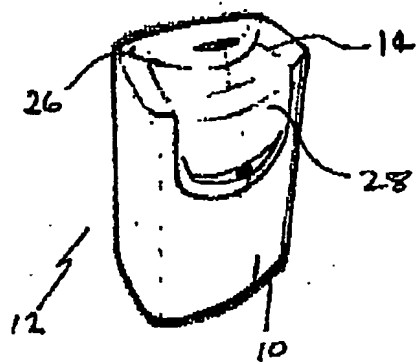


FIG. 2a

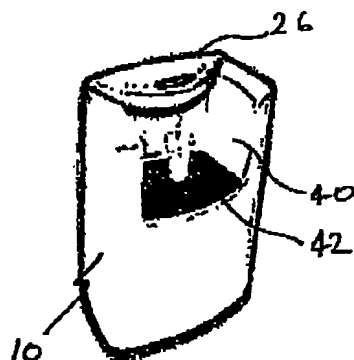


FIG. 2b

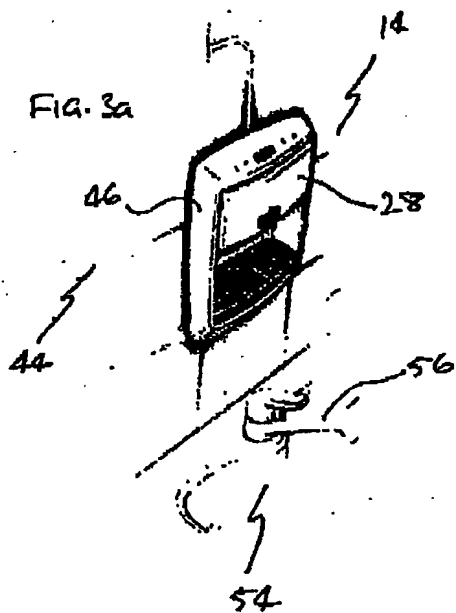


FIG. 3a

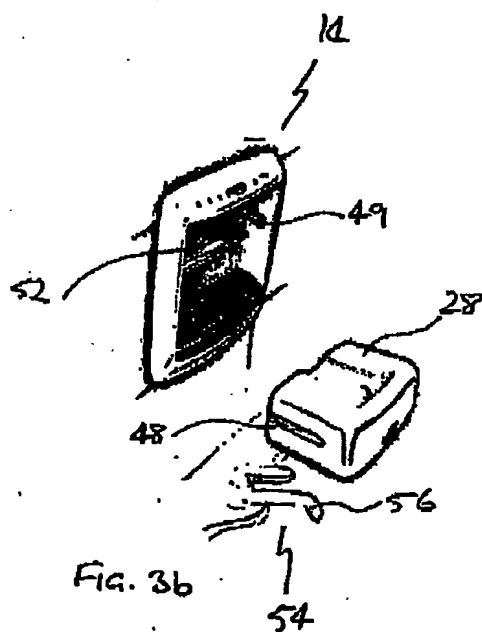
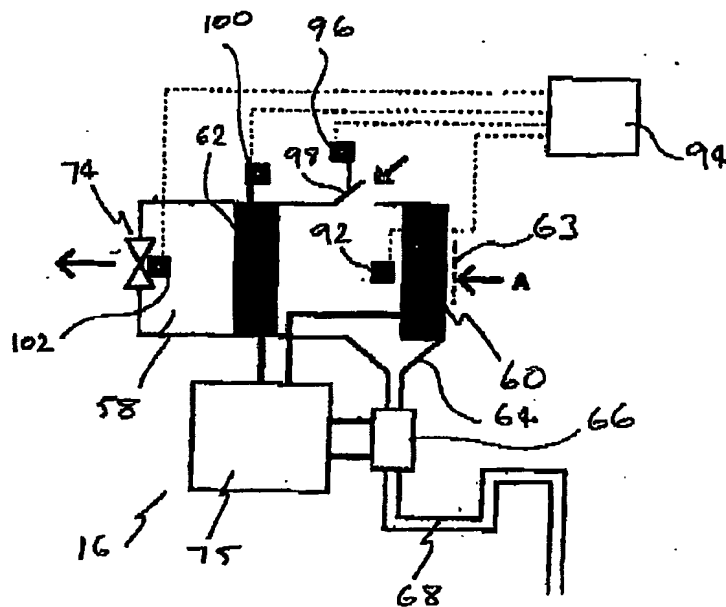
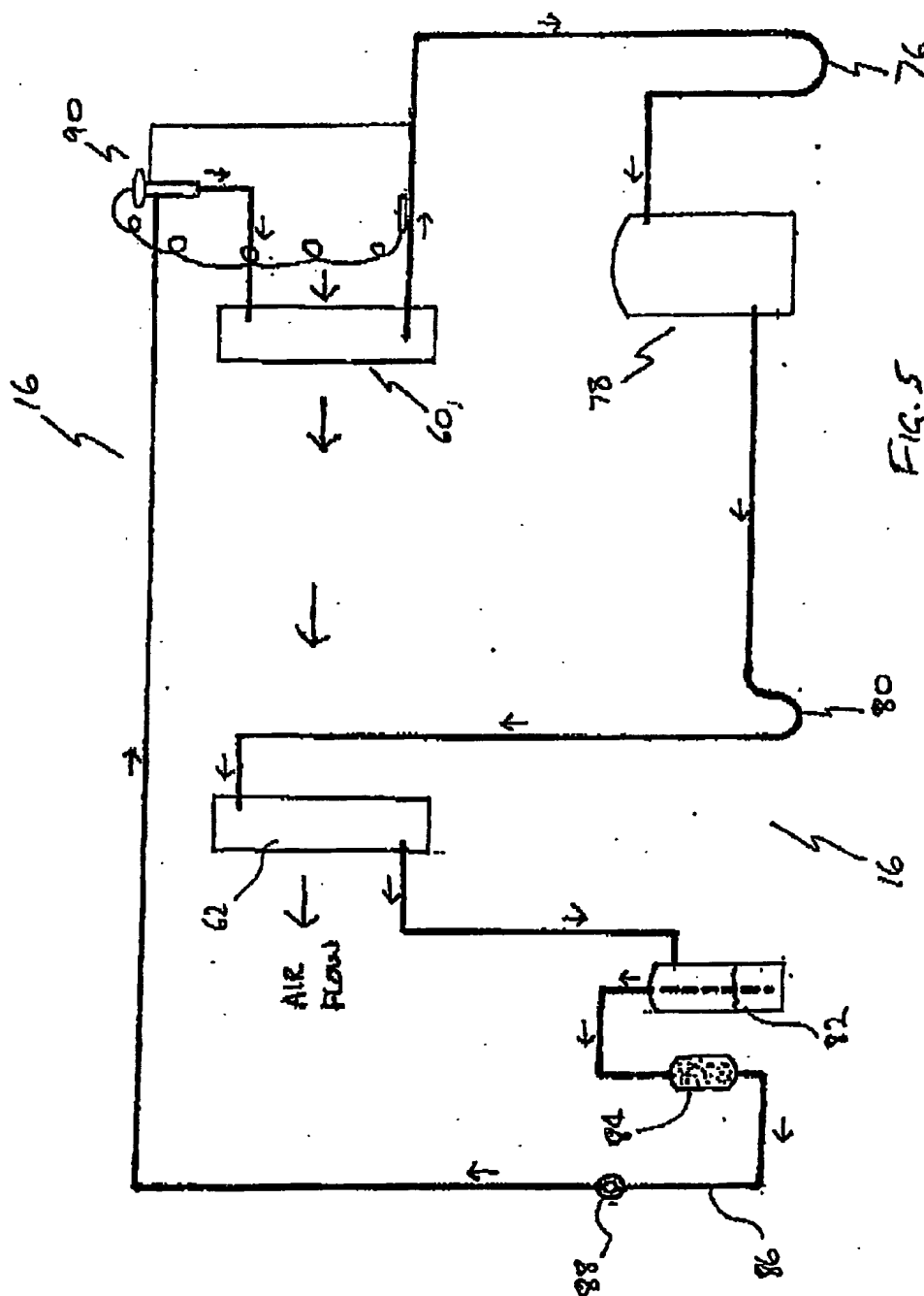


FIG. 3b

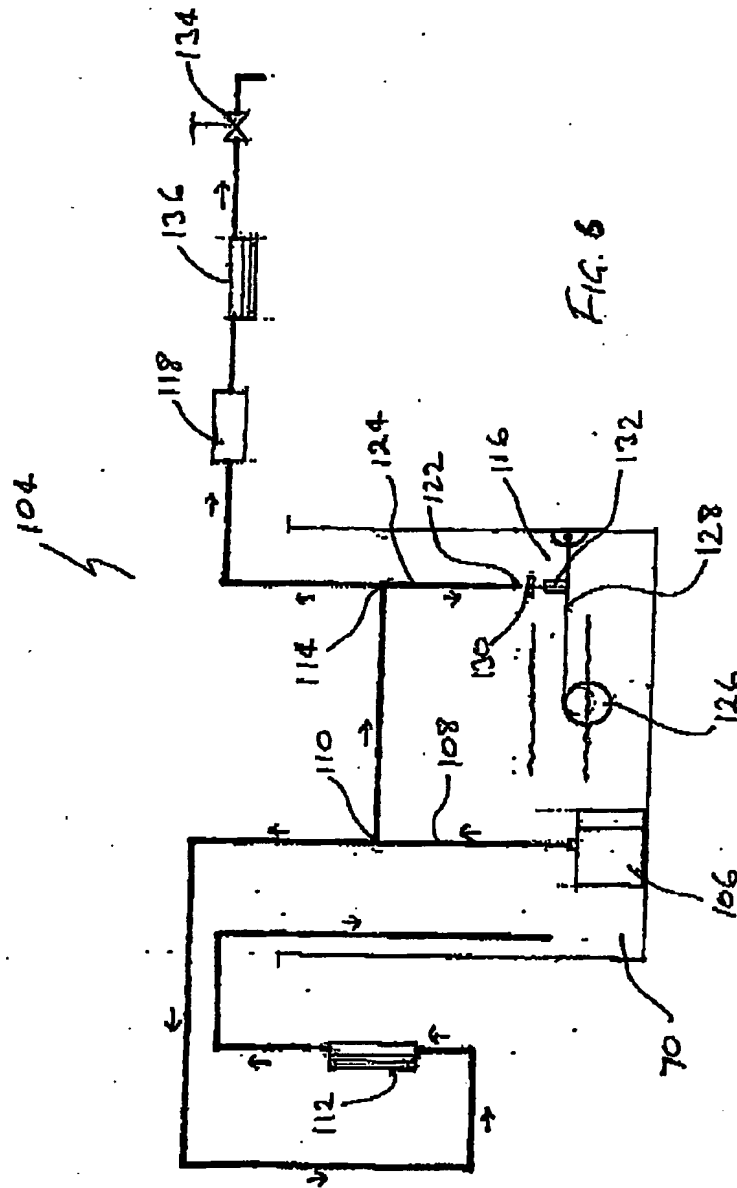
3/8



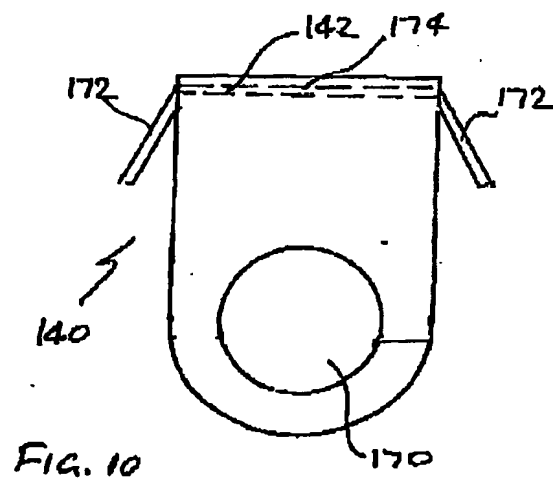
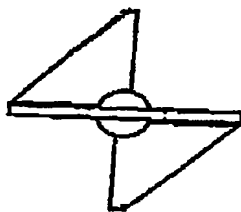
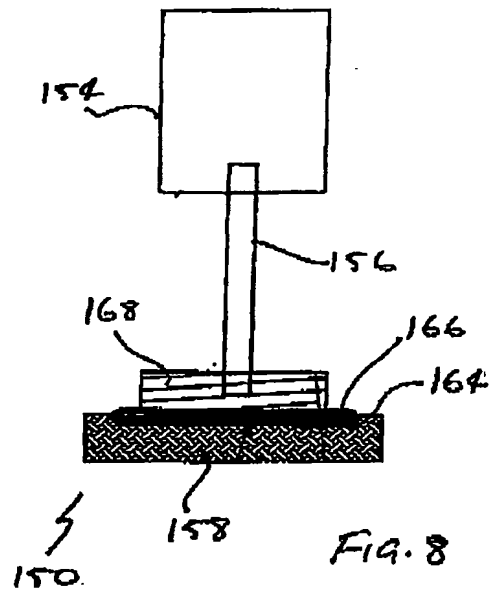
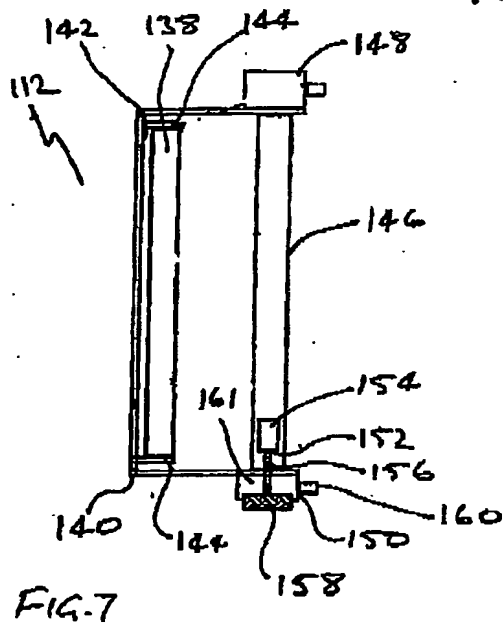
4/8

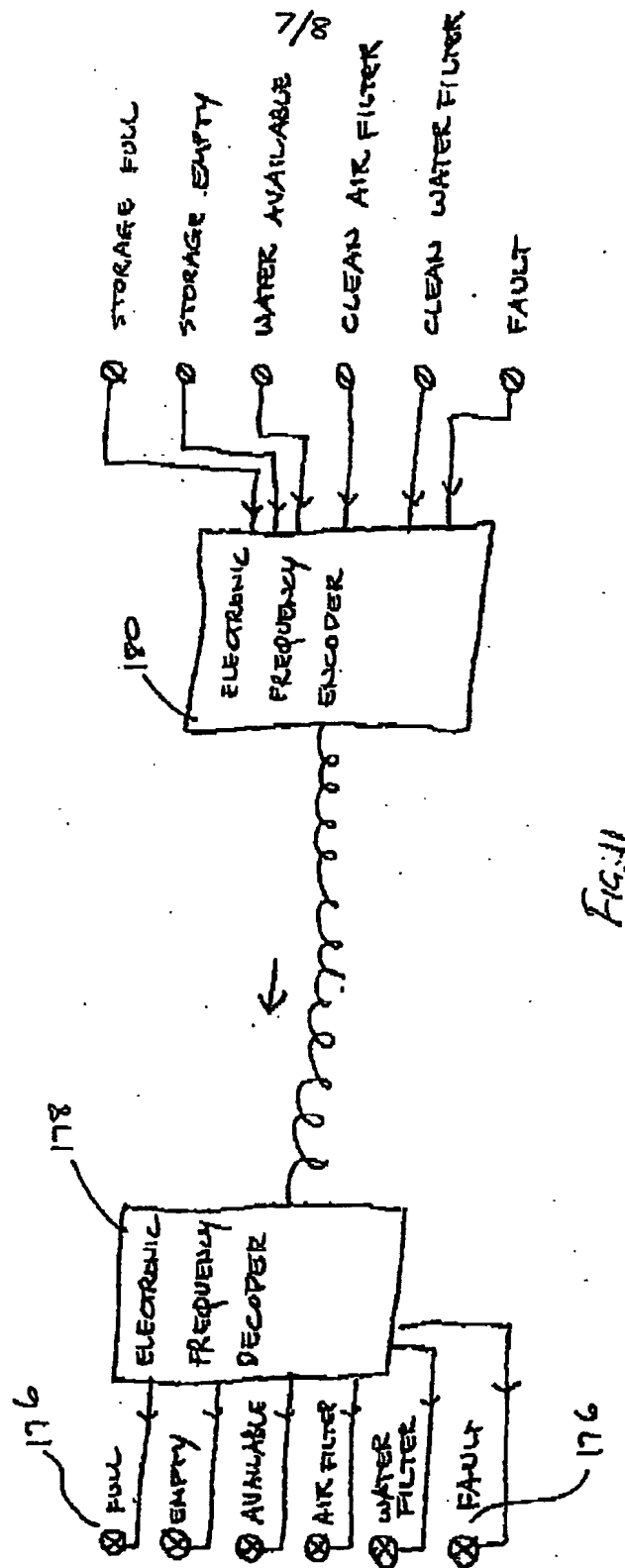


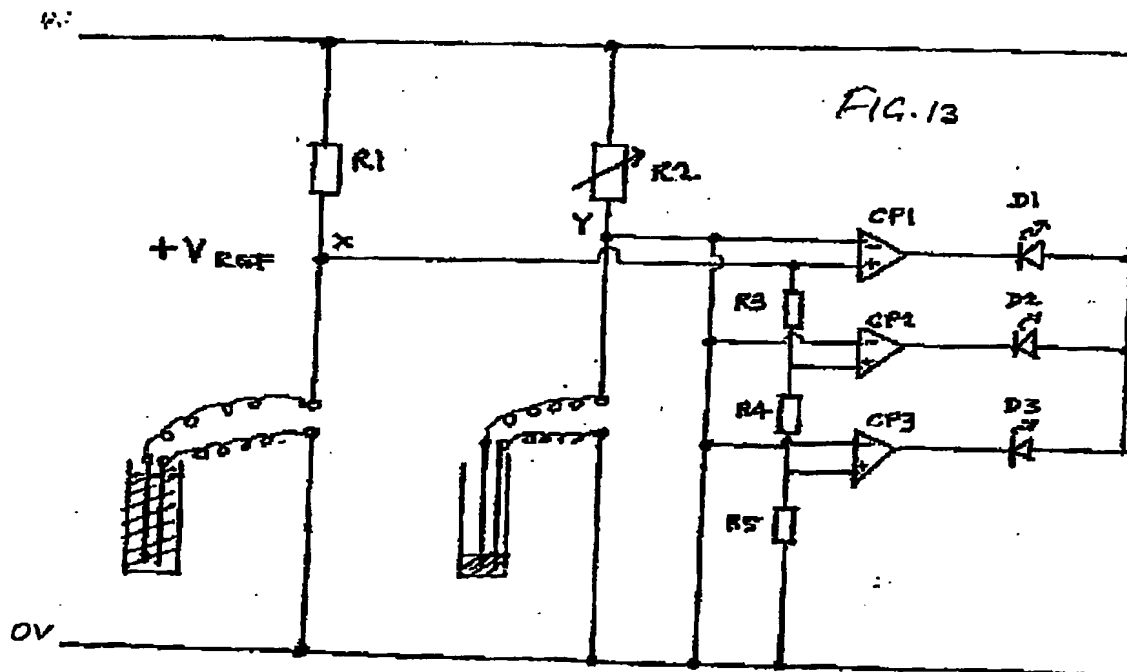
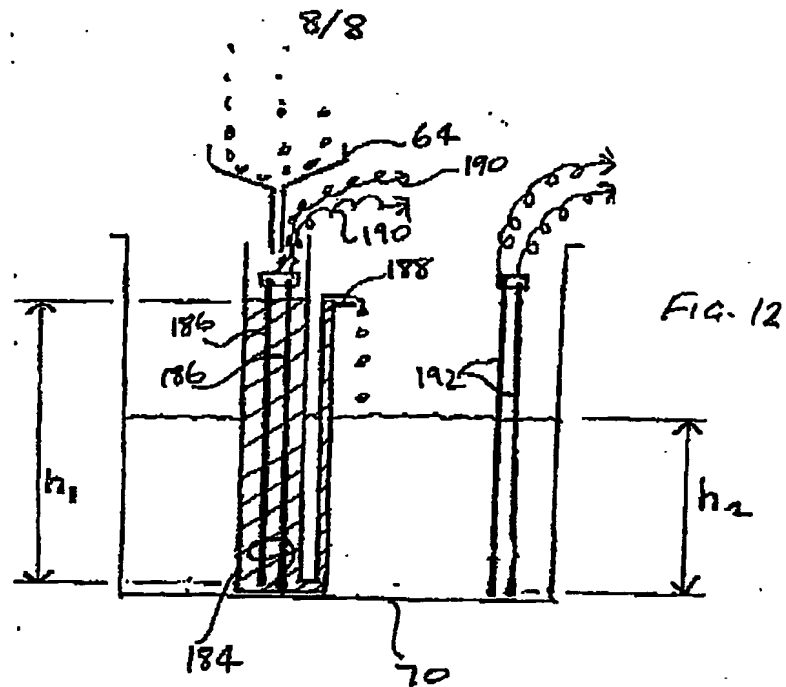
5/8



6/8







Document made available under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)

International application number: PCT/AU04/001754

International filing date: 13 December 2004 (13.12.2004)

Document type: Certified copy of priority document

Document details: Country/Office: AU
Number: 2003906878
Filing date: 12 December 2003 (12.12.2003)

Date of receipt at the International Bureau: 04 January 2005 (04.01.2005)

Remark: Priority document submitted or transmitted to the International Bureau in compliance with Rule 17.1(a) or (b)



World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) - Geneva, Switzerland
Organisation Mondiale de la Propriété Intellectuelle (OMPI) - Genève, Suisse